

Monster Madness

The ancient Greeks often used monsters in their stories to warn of the dangers that lurked beyond their homes. One such monster was the Minotaur, a half-man, half-bull creature that was imprisoned in the labyrinth under the palace of King Minos on the island of Crete. The Minotaur ate human flesh. Every nine years, fourteen young people were sent into the labyrinth to be sacrificed to the Minotaur. The labyrinth was dark and confusing and had many dead ends. No one who entered ever returned until Theseus, the brave prince of Athens, was able to kill the Minotaur and escape from the labyrinth.



Medusa was originally a mortal Gorgon with beautiful hair. However, she was boastful and bragged that her hair was more beautiful than that of the goddess Athena. Athena punished Medusa by changing her into a horrifying, snake-haired creature that would turn anyone who looked at her to stone. Medusa's punishment, like that of many other mortals in Greek mythology, resulted from her disrespect to the gods.

The sphinx was a creature with the head, shoulders, and chest of a woman. She had the body and claws of a lion, and the wings of a huge bird. The sphinx strangled anyone who could not answer her riddle. This monster perched on the cliffs above the road to Thebes until a prince answered her riddle, then she killed herself.

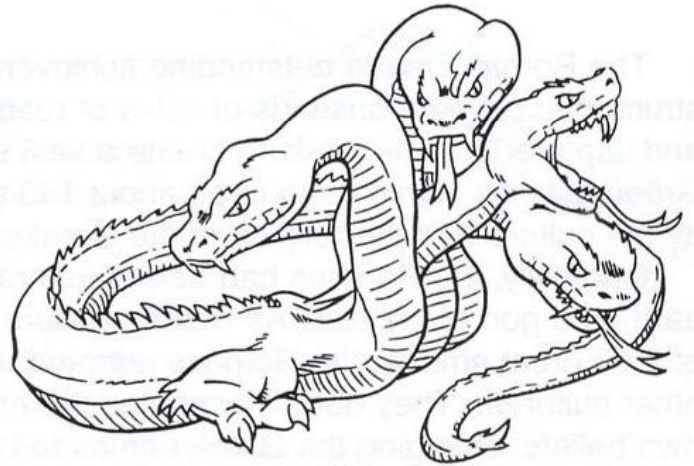


The Chimaera was a terrifying creature that was half lion and half mountain goat with a snake's tail. It breathed fire, and its skin was so tough that it could not be pierced. The hero Belshazzor of Corinth killed this creature.



Monster Madness (continued)

The Hydra proved to be one of Hercules' greatest challenges. This multi-headed reptile could regrow two heads as fast as one could be cut off. With its fangs, poisonous tongue, and sharp claws, the Hydra was finally killed when Hercules cut off the first eight heads, sealed each cut, and cut off and buried the ninth immortal head.



Every sailor knew that the horrible creature Scylla lurked in the Strait of Messina. With the head and torso of a woman and the fins and tail of a fish, Scylla's waist sprouted six wolf heads that barked at and devoured any sailors who passed by. Her equally frightening companion was Charybdis, the gigantic whirlpool. If sailors tried to steer a course to escape from Scylla, their ship was usually swallowed by the ever-hungry Charybdis.

Invent a mythological creature of your own. Give it a name, draw a picture of it in the box, and describe its origin, personality, and powers.

Name: _____

Origin: _____

Personality: _____

Powers: _____

